



A Dozen Quick and Easy Ways to Be a "Clinician-Celebrated Consumer"



1. Believe in **the value of your perspective**. Though it can often be overlooked, it is of primary importance. You are the *only* expert on your own life.
2. Remember **your responsibility**. Your life is your responsibility, and in order to experience the meaningful life you deserve, you will need to take a very active role in your treatment and wellness.
3. Be **informed**. Your providers rarely have time to tell you everything there is to know about mental health – read, research, ask, and explore the many resources available to learn about your illness, and ways to experience wellness.
4. Be **prepared**. Challenges in life are inevitable – especially for those of us living with mental illness. Be prepared for them by making your desires clear with a detailed wellness/recovery plan, and consider an advance directive.
5. Be **connected**. Find local, national, or on-line groups of people who can provide hope, help, and support for your recovery. Consider a DBSA support group (or similar organizations).
6. Be **patient** – to a point. Recovery takes time. Medication, therapy and social bonds take time. While it is incredibly difficult sometimes, be patient. But, if it is clear that some wellness strategy isn't working for you, keep looking for other options.
7. Be **clear**. As much as we'd like them to, providers can't read our minds. Try your best to be clear about your experiences, your needs, and your desires. Before meeting with a provider, try to write down what you'd like to tell them, your questions, and answers to questions that they might ask. Also, try tracking your moods, energy, feelings, side effects, appetite, etc. using wellness tracking calendars and charts.
8. Bring **support**. Two sets of ears are often better than one. When we are ill and under stress, we are more likely to miss or misinterpret what our providers say. If the doctor says something unexpected or upsetting, we may focus on that part of the visit. In doing so, we may miss explanations or other important information. When you bring someone else to listen, you both can discuss the visit afterwards.
9. Use the **internet**, but **use it wisely**. There are trusted information sources on the internet that you should actively explore, but there is also some bad stuff out there. Talk with your providers and fellow consumers about what you're finding on the internet and check its validity with them.
10. **Explore the real reason you're seeking help**. What does "**recovery**" look like? Many consumers truly want more than simply a reduction of symptoms, but providers don't know what your idea of a meaningful life in the community is.
11. **Find the right provider** for your needs. Remember that providers may or may not fit your personality. Give them a chance, but if you're not comfortable or don't like the way they respond to your questions/feelings, consider finding someone new. Spend some time thinking about the personality of a provider you would like to see. How would they act? What would they say? What are things you want to be sure to avoid?
12. **Be respectful, but have high expectations**. Remember that your providers have overloaded schedules and are almost always trying their best. However, you should also expect high quality service, high quality providers, and treatment that is based on your needs.